

# Sustainable Campuses

## Winter 2003

Winter 2003

February 2003

### **Ivory Tower goes Greener: Canada's Campuses are becoming More Sustainable**

*By: How-Sen Chong*

The restrooms in the C.K. Choi Building are different than most others at the University of British Columbia. In fact, they are different than most of those found across Canada: on the clean white walls are instructions on how to use the toilets.

The instructions are for the building's composting toilets. Special care is required for their proper use. Once done, solid waste is broken down into compost by natural processes, and waste liquids are pumped out and treated by a vegetation system that renders them safe for bathing by Vancouver's health regulations.

These toilets are but one of the many features that has earned the C.K. Choi Building international acclaim as one of the greenest buildings in the world, according to Ruth Abramson, Communications Director at the UBC Sustainability Office. Since the design of the building allows for plenty of natural light and its ventilation systems use almost no moving mechanical parts, the C.K. Choi Building is 70% more energy efficient than standards set by energy-conscious building owners.

The C.K. Choi building is a success story in what is a growing national movement to make educational campuses more sustainable. University administrators are beginning to learn that their immense physical and intellectual resources can be used to effect sustainable change within society.

This is by no means a completely new idea. In the late 1970s, ENvironnement JEUnesse was formed in Québec, helping the province's high schools, colleges, and universities with environmental projects and educational initiatives for youth – all of which is

run by the youth themselves, according to Pascale LaBonté, V-P Education of ENJEU.

And though administrators have undertaken many projects over the years, it is, in fact, the students themselves who are among the most important actors to the sustainable campuses movement. Along with ENJEU, one of the most active organizations in Canada is the Sierra Youth Coalition. Since 1999, the Sierra Youth Coalition has held a conference on Sustainable Campuses. Its purpose, according to Nicola Scahill, Sustainable Campuses Project Coordinator of the SYC, is to train students in executing their own projects and to facilitate networking between students and student organizations.

Student leaders at the University of Alberta have found the Sustainable Campuses Network a "tremendous help", says Mike Hudema, President of the UAlberta Student Union. Thanks in large part to the ideas and contacts made through the Sustainable Campuses network, a sustainability taskforce was created, a sustainability review has been undertaken, and a university conference has been planned featuring such eminent speakers such as Ralph Nader – all within the past year.

Though there has always been strong support for environment and sustainability on campus, student leaders have only recently seen the environment as something that the university should take a leadership role in. According to Tarah Wright, a Dalhousie University professor and expert on Sustainability in Higher Education, this idea has taken off over the past three to four years. She notes that networking groups such as ENJEU and the Sierra Youth Coalition are important for this movement. Established networking organizations such as Second Nature and Copernicus have been beneficial for American and European schools, respectively. But in the spectrum of universities on

Winter 2003

the path to sustainability, those with strong administrative support are further along the path. "This is not to say that students are not important," she says. "Student demands are often met by administrators. But students come and go and are a transient population. It is important that upper administrators are dedicated to the project."

Nicola Scahill agrees. "When students make links with administration and staff on campus, they tend to be more successful," she says. Scahill cites the University of Victoria and the University of Waterloo Sustainability Projects (UVSP and UWSP, respectively) as successful case studies. These two organizations link student projects with course credit and community needs. Thus, a student project on wetland restoration can be undertaken on a campus pond, as is being done at Waterloo.

What is remarkable about the Sustainability Campus movement is its pace of growth. This year's Sustainable Campuses Conference, to be held at Waterloo, will be the largest yet, with administrators, student leaders, and staff and faculty members alike. "I would characterize Canada's sustainable campus movement as 'emerging'," says Wright. "In the past few years, it has moved from rhetoric into action. Canadian schools are slowly coming around."

## **The University of British Columbia Sustainability Pledge: Building a Sustainable University**

*By Rebecca Best, Student Co-ordinator*

One part commitment and three parts resources, UBC's new Sustainability Pledge project is about connecting students to sustainability. Designed and run by students, the pilot project is supported by the UBC Campus Sustainability Office and Student Development. The idea comes from the Graduation Pledge campaign running at many universities and colleges in the United States, and at Dalhousie. While the Graduation Pledge focuses on social and environmental responsibility in job hunting and at work, the Sustainability Pledge project has a broader purpose.

The first objective is to encourage student commitment to social, economic, and ecological sustainability. The second objective is to offer students resources to help them honour this commitment. It starts when students sign the following online Pledge statement: *"I pledge to explore and take into account the social and ecological consequences of my decisions."*

February 2003

*Furthermore, I pledge to use the knowledge I gain while at UBC to improve the sustainability of the communities in which I live, learn, and work."*

Once students have signed the Pledge, they receive monthly newsletters with ideas for incorporating sustainability into their individual decisions and information about how they can get involved on campus. Students also have access to listings of UBC courses and research programs related to sustainability, and to related job hunting tools.

The student team working on the Pledge project is also working with undergraduate societies to organize "employment opportunities in sustainability" talks during Faculty weeks, and using the newsletters to let Pledge-signers know about other events at UBC. For more information about the Pledge, please see [www.sustain.ubc.ca/sustainable\\_u](http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/sustainable_u).

## **ULSF Update**

*By: Heather Tallent*

**University Leaders for a Sustainable Future (ULSF)** has had a busy year working with colleges and universities around the world to promote sustainability on campus and developing partnerships with other organizations dedicated to sustainability in higher education.

There was considerable NGO activity on Higher Education for Sustainable Development at the **Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)**. Article 117 of the Plan of Implementation recommends to the UN General Assembly that it announce a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development beginning in 2005. The Ubuntu Declaration, calling for the mainstreaming of sustainable development into school curricula at every level of education, was issued there by 11 of the world's foremost education and scientific organizations

[www.un.org/events/wssd/pressconf/020901conf1.htm](http://www.un.org/events/wssd/pressconf/020901conf1.htm) - "Press Conference on 'Ubuntu Declaration' on Education").

Two hundred and eighty-three Type II Partnerships were announced, with approximately 12 focused on education for sustainability, including the "Global Virtual University for Sustainable Development", "Educating for Sustainable Living and the Earth Charter", and the "Global Higher Education for Sustainability Partnership" (GHESP). In the latter, three higher education organizations – ULSF, the International Association of Universities (IAU), and COPERNICUS-CAMPUS, the European secretariat

Winter 2003

for the Copernicus Charter – and UNESCO have combined forces in a unique effort to mobilize universities and higher education institutions to

- Promote expanded endorsement and full implementation of the Talloires, Kyoto, and Copernicus declarations;
- Enhance the development of regional centers of excellence in both developed and developing countries, and effective networking among them;
- Produce an action-oriented Toolkit for universities, managers, administrators, faculty and students designed to move from commitment to concrete action.

Other current ULSF projects include expanding the online Resources Database, conducting a survey of Sustainability Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) users to make the SAQ more relevant and useful, and developing implementation plans for Talloires Declaration signatories. ULSF staff members have also been visiting a number of institutions to assess, evaluate and make recommendations for campus sustainability programs. The latest issue of *The Declaration*, ULSF's biannual report, is out, and includes articles on:

- How Sustainability in Higher Education fared at the WSSD;
- Canada's student campus sustainability movement (written by SYC's Nicola Scahill!);
- A Ph.D. dissertation analysis and survey of U.S. Talloires Declaration signatories;
- A comprehensive international review of campus sustainability assessments;
- Curriculum for sustainability at Mexico's Monterrey Tec; and
- A movement for sustainable living on campuses in North America (by Yonatan Strauch).

For more information on ULSF, visit our website at [www.ulsf.org](http://www.ulsf.org), or contact Heather Tallent at [htallent@hsus.org](mailto:htallent@hsus.org), phone: (202) 778-6141.

## Harvard University's Resource Efficiency Program

*By: Zach Liscow*

Harvard University's Resource Efficiency Program (REP) is a new joint effort between undergraduate students and administrators. The student Environmental Action Committee teamed up with the Office of Physical Resources, Harvard Recycling, and the Harvard Green Campus Initiative to pay fifteen students -- one for each for many of Harvard's residences -- to educate their fellow students about waste reduction and energy efficiency. In just one

February 2003

support sustainable development. The major GHESP objectives for the next five years include the following:

semester, the program is already making an impact on the campus. Between October and December 2002, REP delivered hundreds of new recycling bins and energy conservation switch-plate stickers, ran a competition to get students to turn computers off when not in use, conducted a dorm-by-dorm lighting audit, and fielded dozens of conservation questions from curious students. We are working on quantifying the savings achieved through REP in order to support proposals for similar programs at other campuses. For more information, see <http://www.greencampus.harvard.edu/REP>.

Inspired by the SYC conference, the Environmental Action Committee is putting together "The Green Guide to Living at Harvard" for distribution to Harvard's students. We plan to have sections on specific locations (in the area or on the Internet) for buying environmentally friendly products, such as paper, light bulbs, food, or printer cartridges. We plan to combine this information with motivational statistics and books and websites to refer to for more information. The Harvard Square Business Association has expressed interest in working with us, increasing the probability that we will be able to add additional inducements, like coupons, for buying these environmentally friendly products.

If anyone has general information on buying green on university campuses or templates to follow, please e-mail Zach Liscow: [liscow@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:liscow@fas.harvard.edu)

## The Campus as a Living Laboratory for Sustainability Studies

*By: Emily Sadigh*

Already students and staff at Harvard, as at universities around the world, are cooperating on projects which will mean that soon students will come home from class to dorm rooms that are not overheated, turn on energy-efficient lights powered by a significant percentage of wind energy, bring their reusable mugs to the dining hall for late-night snacks of fair trade coffee and organic fruit, and compost the fruit peels left on their plates. However, universities have a responsibility not only to take immediate action to reduce the ecological footprint of their campuses but also to contribute to long-term societal stability by

Winter 2003

integrating sustainability studies into courses across all departments.

As one promising method to accomplish both goals is to invite students to take part in studies in campus sustainability in their academic course work, this winter I began a study examining the benefits, challenges, and future prospects for this approach at Harvard College (the undergraduate division of Harvard University). Many of my findings can be generalized to apply to other universities. With faculty cooperation, curricular changes could also improve students' environmental literacy. In a few years, the next generation of students could be returning home from a course on campus ecology that was held in a day-light room in a new solar-powered building, happy to have received an A on a paper analyzing the effects of the recent reintroduction of native fauna to the campus.

Students might take on academic projects relating to campus environmental sustainability as a service-learning project within a course on any topic or as part of a dedicated campus-greening course. Topics might be as varied as archaeological study of past use of the campus lands, biological studies of how to make the campus a more effective greenhouse gas sequestration, medical studies of the effects of pesticides used on campus on human health, chemistry studies of how to reverse polluting reactions, economic studies of the true life cycle cost of products used on campus, analysis of how

- Establish a fund for senior summer thesis research on topics relating to campus operations or environmental literacy
- Provide list of project research ideas on environmental studies or other website
- President/provost/dean's office prioritizes environmental literacy as a criteria for the distribution of course development funding
- Redirect cost savings to sponsoring departments or to financial aid
- Encourage upper class students to form small inter-disciplinary groups, prepare proposed reading lists, and learn about environmental literacy topics along with a professor/advisor.

February 2003

government programs influence campus initiatives such as fuels used by campus fleets, psychological studies of how to best encourage recycling, sociological examination of why students purchase hazardous products, or statistical work on improving data collection for dorm resource use measures.

Benefits accrue to students via improved learning experiences, to faculty through improved outcomes for their students, and to operations' ability to reduce the campus' ecological footprint through support from informed student researchers and active faculty clients. The campus community as a whole also benefits as the various constituencies work with each other, often interacting for the first time. Finally, the university can improve its relations with its local community by reducing its impact and providing students with the skills to address community problems.

Despite all of these evident benefits, significant barriers remain to including campus environmental operations as hands-on assignments in the academic curriculum of Harvard College. I interviewed students, faculty, administrators, and staff who found the idea intriguing but mentioned barriers including student awareness, faculty hesitation due to limited time or lack of interest in the topic, and the time limitations of operations staff.

Some general recommendations to address these challenges include:

- Encourage the creation of a yearly "sustainability project" in every department. Provide funds to hire student researchers.
- Trial a campus greening course through the summer school or extension school. Modules from this course can be adapted by professors from other faculties.
- Prepare documentation/handbook for understanding the university (how it works, who works here, who makes what decisions, whom to talk to for certain info, which services are in-house and which are out-sourced, etc.)

## **Campus Environmental Responsibility: A Challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century at the University of Alberta**

*By: Geneva Rae*

A learning institution provides opportunities for students, faculty and administration to collaborate on efforts to ensure the ecological sustainability of the immediate community and reduce the impact on the global environment. Universities team with idealists, pragmatists, and visionaries, often working in virtual isolation from the solutions needed to solve real-world problems such as increasing desertification, climate change, acid deposition, and the loss of biodiversity. These issues require research and action based solutions. The university environment provides abundant opportunity to work towards sustainable solutions: test theories, support 'greening' projects, gather grassroots support, and educate thousands of individuals how to create positive lifestyles, both socially and environmentally, on their university campus.

Beyond the faculty and administration, grassroots student organizations can provide an alternative dimension to the bureaucratic structures that often impede the shift towards more sustainable practices. Green Campus, a student led, but not exclusive group, began in the spring of 2002 with aspirations to 'green' the University of Alberta and to help bring ecological and social sustainability into the consciousness of the entire campus community.

While Green Campus is the grassroots group primarily composed of students there was a need to establish an office to facilitate and organize environmental efforts. As such, the Students Union passed Bylaw 7500 in 2002 creating the Environmental Coordination Office of Students, or ECOS, with a mandate to increase environmental awareness on campus and provide students and the rest of the campus community with resources and tools to lead lives with reduced ecological footprints. A Director and Associate Director position was created and a budget established to allow for marketing, volunteer promotion, minimal projects and general operations of the office. Outside funding sources are also evaluated and applied for when necessary.

Different from some greening the campus groups, ECOS is a service of the Students Union and as such must establish itself as an integral service for students amongst other services such as Information Services or the Student Distress Centre. This does not negate the importance of grassroots activism; in fact ECOS has the opportunity to align the interests and goals of a diverse group of people within a coherent framework to produce long-lasting change on the campus.

The ECOS mandate includes the coordination of student volunteer groups that have established their own area of inquiry such as the Paper Group that has been investigating paper consumption on campus. Early in the beginning of the 2002/03 semester Green Campus met and individuals grouped themselves according to area(s) of interest and formed working groups. To date we have four including Paper, Energy & Water, the Campus Garden, and Education, Under the direction of the Director and Associate Director, groups meet, organize their short and long term goals and develop and implement their project ideas.

Our current educational paradigm is deficient in adequate dissemination of ecological knowledge. The citizens and decision-makers of the future lack an education with the essential knowledge to overcome challenges that are present in our globalized world and the potential problems we may face in the coming decades. ECOS supports all faculty and university efforts to establish a core curriculum to graduate ecologically literate people.

Students are keenly aware of the advances in their respective fields and are at a stage in their lives where they feel they can take on the world and solve all its problems. It is this energy and drive that can be organized and harnessed to achieve the goals of greening the campus. Success in this venture lies with the commitment of individuals, communication with the entire campus community about projects and environmental issues of local and global concern, and institutionalizing the group within the learning establishment. As more universities support Campus Greening efforts, it will become a ubiquitous practice institutionalized within all aspects of campus experience, from the curriculum to general operational procedures. ECOS hopes to sow those seeds at the University of Alberta.

As a leading learning institution in Canada, the University of Alberta should heed calls for campus environmental responsibility from students, staff, and faculty, and demonstrate commitment to their vision that the "University of Alberta is committed to becoming indisputably recognized nationally and internationally for its excellence in scholarly teaching,

Winter 2003

research and community service" (LRDP, 2002). The challenge for this new century will be the political and social will to achieve ecological integrity, social justice, and a new economy devoid of the growth model. The university environment is the perfect opportunity to create a better world.

---

## **Red River College Eco Files**

*By: Natalie Seaba*

### **RECYCLING FOR ALL**

As of September 2002, all Red River College campuses have recycling programs that are either supported through the rural municipality or through the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation (MPSC) Star Plus Program.

MPSC allocates \$2.50 per full time equivalent student each year under the program, which is intended to provide an opportunity to expand recycling at universities and colleges in Manitoba.

MPSC is a statutory corporation that operates at "arm's length" from the provincial government, and is currently funded solely by the 2 cent levy on all beverage containers (excluding dairy) sold in Manitoba.

There is another important reason to recycle at RRC besides the numerous environmental benefits of diverting waste from the landfill. Our Recycling and Waste Reduction Program also has a positive social impact, by our partnerships with two companies that support people with developmental handicaps and disabilities

The first organization is called Network South, which places individuals in work environments. Five people work at the college as our Red River Recyclers, providing us exceptional recycling service.

A different company called Versatech Industries comes to the college twice a week to take all the paper, cardboard and plastic we collect to their recycling facility. This non-profit organization employs many people with developmental handicaps at the facility and benefits directly by selling the material collected at Red River College.

Last year, the estimated gross revenue to Versatech was approximately \$14,000.00. Please note that this figure does not include operational costs of the organization.

### **COMPOSTING AT RRC**

Red River College has undertaken a one year composting pilot project that began September 30, 2002. Organic pre-consumer food (preparation

February 2003

scraps - not food from people's plates) is collected from all seven kitchens daily.

In the first ten weeks of the program, 2.7 tons of material has been collected for composting. The benefits of this program are extensive. We are conserving resources (valuable nutrients and fossil fuels), reducing pollution (harmful methane gases and toxic leachate in the landfill), reducing waste disposal costs, making healthy soil with the finished product and much more...

### **THE PAPER TRAIL – enroute to efficient paper use**

Red River College consumed a total of 21,149,058 sheets of paper in 2001/2002.

21 million sheets of paper has a paper "footprint" of approximately:

- 1,600 trees cut down
- 3,800 kilograms of air pollution emitted
- enough water to run a regular flow shower nonstop for 1.2 years
- enough oil for 10,000 years worth of oil changes for a typical car

Since 62% of this paper contained 30% post-consumer recycled content, these numbers will be slightly less.

Additional costs of high paper usage include printing, postage, storage and disposal. The Paper Trail is an initiative to encourage more efficient paper use, which results in real cost-savings. Efficient paper use also means reducing the amount of energy, water and trees required to support Red River.

Check out the new and improved Environmental Management Website for 7 tools available to help you to reduce your paper use.

([http://www.rrc.mb.ca/environmentalmanagement/promotion\\_education.htm](http://www.rrc.mb.ca/environmentalmanagement/promotion_education.htm))

### **GREEN PURCHASING**

Sometimes it seems overwhelming. We probably all ask ourselves at times, "Do the little things I do actually make a difference?" This is normal, but it is important to not let "paralysis by analysis" set in.

We all know that money talks. As consumers we have the power to influence markets according to the values we have for this world and our families. A large

Winter 2003

institution with a high level of buying power like RRC has the ability to significantly influence markets.

Eco-procurement means environmentally and economically responsible purchasing. RRC has taken steps in this direction. For example, it is possible to find the odd product that has recycled content in the Bookstore or at the student store. The custodians are now using an environmentally friendly cleaner.

Campuses are huge consumers of paper, so it was a progressive step for the College to begin purchasing recycled content paper in 2001. 62% of the 21 million sheets consumed last year was the Recycled Husky brand, which is made with 30% post-consumer paper waste.

Manitoba's Sustainable Development Act requires that all post-secondary institutions in Manitoba integrate sustainable development procurement and financial management guidelines into our manuals and procedures. Working groups are set to meet beginning January 2003 to determine how this will be accomplished.

### **GREENSPACE MANAGEMENT ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY**

One progressive department at RRC has developed it's own environmental strategy. This strategy is based on a commitment by the departmental staff and students to consider the environment during decision making

---

### **Update on the Society for Corporate Environmental and Social Responsibility (CESR)**

*By: Tamara Lorincz*

This past semester from September to December 2002, the Society for Corporate Environmental and Social Responsibility (CESR) was busy organizing events to raise awareness of climate change and to promote a speaker series on positive environmental and social change. CESR co-hosted with the Ecology Action Centre a lecture by Guy Dauncey, environmental consultant and author of *Stormy Weather: 101 Solutions to Climate Change*, in September and a lecture by Dr. Martha Kostuch, veterinarian, on *Health & Environmental Issues from the Oil & Gas Industry* in October. In November, CESR arranged presentations by Dr. William Schabas, international human rights lawyer, on the *Abolition of the Death Penalty* and by Dr. Jack Layton,

February 2003

Toronto city councilor, on *Justice & Jobs in a Green & Democratic Canada*. Our final speaker at the end of November was Michael Jantzi, founder of the Jantzi index, who spoke on *Socially Responsible Investing*.

Over the semester, CESR organized two major events. First, we held a half-hour *Symbolic Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol* ceremony in front of the Student Union Building in October. We had Dr. Peter Duinker, Dr. Tarah Wright and MP Alexa McDonough "sign the Kyoto Protocol." We also had a banner for everyone to "ratify." We had entertainment by Captain Environment, the Radical Cheerleaders and the Raging Grannies. Second, we had a Movie Night with showing of the National Film Board of Canada's *Who's Counting: Sex, Lies and Global Economics*, which was followed by a lecture on the *Genuine Progress Index* by Jeff Wilson. At our Movie Night, we had the producer of the film, Kent Martin, lead a Q&A discussion. To support important causes, CESR launched letter writing campaigns for bike racks and recycling/composting bins on campus, to support the Kyoto Protocol, to stop a war on Iraq and to end sweatshop labour products in the university bookstore. To raise money for our events, we held a bake sale and had a table display to promote climate change issues with literature from the Climate Change Action Fund, Clean Nova Scotia, and the David Suzuki Foundation.

This new year, we have many exciting events planned. On March 22, we will have our second annual *World Water Day* event to encourage water conservation. We are currently organizing our *Alternative Graduation Ceremony* with the Social Environmental Responsibility Pledge and our *Dump & Run* recycling event which will be held in May. We are also planning a *Chinese Evening* to discuss environmental, social and political issues in China at a local Chinese restaurant and *Philosophy Cafes* to talk about Dissent & Change at the Grad House.

The Society for Corporate Environmental and Social Responsibility is a multi-disciplinary student organization based at Dalhousie University and a non-profit society registered in Nova Scotia. We are currently comprised of an 8-member student council and have over 50 regular members. Our members have a shared interest in advancing and acting on issues related to social justice, sustainable development, corporate responsibility, ethics, environmentalism, peace, democracy, good governance and human rights. CESR is an active club on campus and in the community. We organize workshops, lectures, and other events related to our mission. For more information about CESR, please visit our web site at: <http://is2.dal.ca/~cesr> or email us at [cesr@is2.dal.ca](mailto:cesr@is2.dal.ca)